

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Uncompahgre Field Office  
2465 S. Townsend Ave.  
Montrose, CO 81401**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

**DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0014 EA**

Project Name: Tabeguache Creek Native Fish Barrier Removal Project

Location: Tabeguache Creek at T47N, R17W, Section 2 SE1/4 NE1/4, Montrose County

Applicant: BLM

**Background**

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office has completed Environment Assessment (EA) # DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0014 EA which analyzes the effects of dismantling and removing a small concrete dam which is currently blocking passage for sensitive fish species to upstream habitat. The concrete dam has no apparent use now, but was likely associated with a Uravan Pipeline water right to provide municipal water supply to the former town of Uravan. An ownership inquiry letter was also sent to UMETCO which owns the former townsite, and additional due diligence was performed to identify any ownership claims to the structure, with no response received. In addition, the Uravan Pipeline water right was listed on the 2011 Gunnison Basin Abandonment List with no statements of opposition. As a result, the BLM has decided to proceed with the EA.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0014 EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

**Rationale**

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

**Context**

The project is located on Tabeguache Creek, a small perennial stream in Western Montrose County. The small concrete dam that spans the stream and holds back a small pool of water (50ft by 20 ft.) is located approximately 0.5 miles upstream from the confluence with the San

Miguel River. The 0.5 miles of stream downstream from the dam is important habitat for three sensitive native warm water fish species-- bluehead sucker, flannemouth sucker, and roundtail chub. Tabeguache Creek extends for many miles upstream of the dam, but the sensitive fish are largely unable to access this habitat because it is blocked by the dam.

## **Intensity**

### *1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Beneficial impacts would be eight or more miles of new spawning and nursery habitat available to the three sensitive fish species and other native fish. Adverse impacts include limited and short term vegetation disturbance, soil compaction and soil disturbance within the stream bed and on the riparian terrace. There is also the possibility of nonnative fish invasion into the upper portions of Tabeguache Creek from the San Miguel River, limited injury or death to young sensitive fish and frog species in the short term, and to other aquatic wildlife as well during the three day construction period, and limited displacement of birds and other wildlife species during this same time. Sediment levels are expected to increase somewhat for the short term in downstream waters as the stream erodes the sediment deposits behind the dam, and the short reach of affected stream channel regains equilibrium following the structure removal. Travelers on the County Road may be briefly detained as equipment for the project is loaded or unloaded.

### *2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

Public health and safety will not be affected by this action.

### *3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project is located within a reach of Tabeguache Creek that is considered eligible for Wild and Scenic River status. The dam is a historic artifact, which has undergone a complete intensive recordation including historic architectural survey and documentation.

### *4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The quality and use of the human environment in the project area is understood, has been analyzed, and is not highly controversial from a scientific or public standpoint. Information or data that would demonstrate the impacts described in the EA are highly controversial have not been brought forward.

### *5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

While this field office has not had direct experience with stream barrier removal before, this is a

small scale project, and the effects are predictable. Effects from the proposed action would not be classified as highly uncertain or involving unique or unknown risks.

*6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This project represents a unique situation in the UFO. It is unlikely that there will be similar projects for which this would establish a precedent. Any future proposals would have to be evaluated on their own merits based on the issues and impacts related to the location, timing, and intensity of each action. The proposed action does not set a precedent for a future consideration.

*7) Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Other projects affecting this stream and the nearby river and fish populations are foreseeable, but it is not anticipated that detrimental cumulative impacts of any significance would occur. The limited scale of activity creates minimal individual effects, as well as minimal cumulative effects when added to the existing situation and other potential activities.

*8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

Field surveys were completed and the Tabeguache diversion dam has been found to be ineligible for nomination to the National Register and no further cultural work is required. The dam has undergone a complete intensive recordation including historic architectural survey and documentation.

*9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

There would be no impacts to endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat.

*10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

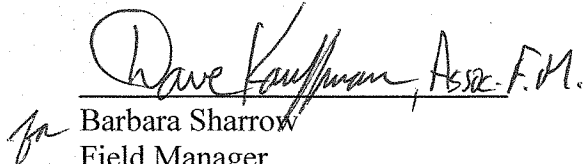
A Nationwide Permit 27 for aquatic habitat restoration, establishment, and enhancement activities will be needed to comply with the Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Once this permit is obtained, the proposed action does not threaten violation of any laws or regulations imposed for the protection of the environment.

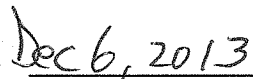
## **Determination**

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the

implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

  
for Barbara Sharrow  
Field Manager  
Uncompahgre Field Office

  
Date